



Dealing With Unwanted Advice

GRAB & GO // SPRING 2015



women's
health clinic



Notes for the presenter:

This information is useful for all pregnant people and new families.
In this session group members will:

- » explore the impact of past advice they've heard
- » learn how to deal with unwanted advice that doesn't respect their personal knowledge of themselves, their children and families
- » learn techniques to help them express their views and to feel confident about their parenting choices

Encourage women group members to share their experiences in a safe and non-judgmental environment.

It's common for new mothers to feel insecure. Many people have opinions about how mothers should do things. We're raised to trust health care professionals, parents with more experience, or other people seen as experts on children. New mothers are often overwhelmed with advice and may feel they're not allowed to trust their own ideas, thoughts and feelings.

Acknowledge there is no one way to parent. We may not agree with other people's choices but that doesn't make them right or wrong, just different.

Remind group members to be respectful. We all have different opinions and experiences. Invite them to express their feelings and thoughts in a non-judgmental and non-threatening way.

You will find the Coping with Change; A New Mothers Guide booklet in this resource. For more copies:

- » call the Mothers Program Assistant at Women's Health Clinic: 204-947-2422 ext.113
- » email: register@womenshealthclinic.org
- » visit our website: www.womenshealthclinic.org

Activity 1

In the opening round, the group will discuss unwanted advice and its affects

Activity 2

- a. Discuss Communication Strategy Cards
- b. Match different communication strategies with common advice scenarios.

Activity 3

Open discussion about what to do when friends and family continue to give unwanted advice.



Activity 1: Opening Round

You can use the opening round for group members to introduce themselves. All questions, answers or other text for you to read aloud is in blue. You can ask and answer Question 1 before starting the introductions and ask group members to answer Question 2 when they introduce themselves. Do what works best for your particular group.

Question 1

What is unwanted advice?

- » It's advice given to us when we haven't asked for it. Sometimes unwanted advice makes us feel like our choices or abilities are being judged.

Question 2

What is something you have said or thought after getting unwanted advice?

Remind group members they are not sharing the advice they got, just their reaction to it. Explore how their responses are unique or the same and possible reasons for their different answers.

Question 3

Does anyone want to share why they usually respond to advice this way?

- » How do you feel when you receive advice you never asked for?
 - » Judged (you feel they see flaws in how you parent or care for your family)
 - » Unsure of your abilities (you wonder if they might be right)
 - » Stubborn or threatened (you want to prove them wrong)
- » Do you usually remember the unwanted advice?
- » How do you respond when the advice is from a close family member or friend?
- » How do you feel when those close to you don't seem to listen to you or make you feel you can't do anything right?
- » When you get a compliment about your parenting, do you usually remember it?

Remember to keep an open mind. Some advice can be helpful. If you ignore all the advice you get, you may miss a parenting tip that might work for you. Before parenting books and the Internet, moms learned how to care for their children when women in their families and communities shared their wisdom. You never know who has a good solution to one of your parenting concerns. However, not every suggestion is helpful. Ignoring unwanted advice is one way to deal with it. It may be harder to ignore advice coming from someone you have regular contact with.

Activity 2: Advice and Communication Strategy Cards

This activity looks at advice parents have heard over the years (and may still be hearing). The objective is to give them new ways of dealing with unwanted advice and learn new communication strategies. Each communication strategy card can be placed under the different advice cards and the group can discuss how they might use the strategy. Large advice cards can be read individually or put on a wall and then read.

2a) Communication Strategy Cards

You can distribute the cards and ask group members to read them or you can hold each card up, read the front, ask the group what they think it means, and then read the back of the card.

If space allows, after reading a communication strategy card, tape it to a wall to use in the second part of the activity.

After all cards have been read, ask:

- » What do you think of these strategies?
- » Do you see yourself trying any of them? Why or why not?

2b) Advice Scenario Cards

We include 10 different scenarios. You can choose the ones that would work for your group; you don't have to use all 10 scenarios. Each communication strategy can work with any advice scenario. Ask the group to choose a couple strategies and how they would use that strategy for each advice scenario.

Activity 3: What can new parents do when friends and family are still giving unwanted advice?

Discuss with the group what to do when people they know won't take no for answer. Many new parents have close family or friends who insist on giving advice. That often makes us feel like we are less than or like we can never do anything right.

Let's brainstorm: How do you deal with friends or family who keep giving you advice, no matter what you say to them?

- » agree to disagree
- » change the subject
- » set a time to talk together about how it feels when they tell you that your way is wrong
- » suggest they ask if you want the advice before they start to give it to you
- » assure them you know they love the baby too, but as the parent you will make all the parenting decisions

Wrap Up

Remember that while unwanted advice can frustrate or annoy us, most people mean well. They want to help, not judge you or make you feel like a bad parent. When people see parents struggling, they feel it is their duty to help, especially if they have parenting experience. When you're sleep deprived or don't feel completely confident about your parenting skills, even well-meaning advice can seem like criticism.

Take a deep breath, relax, and try to use some of these strategies to deal with the advice you get. If you're not sure if the advice is helpful or harmful, consider where it comes from. When someone offers advice, ask yourself: "Do I trust their instincts?" "Do I agree with their parenting style?" "Did they get positive results with their kids?" Your answers will tell you if you want to try their suggestions. Remember, you are the expert of your life and your baby's. Trust yourself.

Dealing with Unwanted Advice

has been developed and produced in partnership
by Healthy Child Manitoba & Women's Health Clinic



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***Smile, nod, and make
a non-committal
response like
“Interesting!”***

***Offer to think
about it.***

***Try to find one part of
the advice that you
agree with.***

***Try not to get
defensive.***

Offer to think about it.

This will help keep communication between you open. Remember, there may be times when you'll be welcome their advice and willingness to help. You haven't said that you'll try it, so if they ask later how it went, you don't have to feel bad for not following the advice.

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Smile, nod, and make a non-committal response like "Interesting!"

If you know you can't convince them to change their mind, then simply continue to do things your way.

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Try not to get defensive.

It may feel like you or your parenting is being judged; but chances are the person is genuinely offering what they believe is valuable insight.

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Try to find one part of the advice that you agree with.

If you can, let them know you completely agree on that point.

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Choose your battles.

Educate yourself.

***Don't bring up an
issue if you don't
want advice about it.***

Educate others.

Educate yourself.

Knowledge is power. Learn more about different parenting choices so your opinion is an informed one. Be confident that you are doing your best for your baby.

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Choose your battles.

Know when to let things go and when to challenge. If it really doesn't matter to you, you can avoid conflict by following the advice.

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Educate others.

When advice is outdated or wrong, share the new information you've learned. You may be able to open someone's mind. Refer to a study, book, or report you have read.

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Don't bring up an issue if you don't want advice about it.

If you don't want advice about a specific issue, consider not talking about it. If they bring it up, distract them and change the subject.

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Quote a Health Care Professional.

Memorize a standard response.

Be vague.

Seek out like-minded friends.

Memorize a standard response.

Every time you get a tip you don't agree with, simply say something like "This may not be the right way for every parent, but it's the right way for me."

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Quote a Health Care Professional.

It's easier for some people to accept information when it comes from a professional. For example, "My doctor said to wait until she's at least six months before starting solids."

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Seek out like-minded friends.

Join a local support group or find other people online who share your parenting philosophies. Talking with others who are parenting in similar ways can help you deal with those who don't understand or share your views.

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Be vague.

If you don't answer the specific question, you may be able to avoid conflict. For example, if a friend asks if you've taken your toddler's soother away yet, you can say something like "We are moving in that direction." (even if you aren't ready to do it at this point).

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Be honest.

Be honest.

Don't say you'll try the advice unless you really want to use it. When people think they are helping, they'll likely ask "So how is that working for you?" when they see you. Leading them to believe you welcome their unwanted advice can encourage them to give more of it.

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You've been complaining to your brother that your baby never sleeps and you're always tired. Every time he sees you, he pressures you to let your baby cry till she falls asleep. You don't want to do that.

What communication strategy could you use?

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Your mother-in-law insists that baby wears a hat on your walk to the park.

What communication strategy could you use?

ADVICE SCENARIO CARDS // SPRING 2015

Your sister asks if you've started potty training yet. You feel you're many months away from even starting the process.

What communication strategy could you use?

ADVICE SCENARIO CARDS // SPRING 2015

Your baby is on your lap and you let him bear weight on his legs. Your mother says he will be bowlegged if you let him do it.

What communication strategy could you use?

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Advice Scenario Cards



Advice Scenario Cards



Advice Scenario Cards



Advice Scenario Cards



You are waiting in line at the grocery store and wearing your baby in a carrier. The woman behind you says when her kids were young, mothers didn't spoil their babies by holding them all the time.

What communication strategy could you use?

ADVICE SCENARIO CARDS // SPRING 2015

You are waiting at the bus stop in January. The man beside you tells you babies need to be kept indoors when the temperature is below zero.

What communication strategy could you use?

ADVICE SCENARIO CARDS // SPRING 2015

You have just brought baby home from the hospital. You're feeling disappointed because your birth experience went differently than you hoped. Your partner says you should be happy you have a healthy baby, totally ignoring your feelings.

What communication strategy could you use?

ADVICE SCENARIO CARDS // SPRING 2015

You have decided to exclusively breastfeed your baby even though you're struggling to get it established. Your baby is crying at a family gathering and your aunt tells you that you need to feed the baby a bottle of formula because he is hungry.

What communication strategy could you use?

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Advice Scenario Cards



Advice Scenario Cards



Advice Scenario Cards



Advice Scenario Cards



Your baby has been crying for 10 minutes in the waiting room at the walk-in clinic. The boy next to you offers you his baby brother's soother and says your baby wouldn't cry if she had one.

What communication strategy could you use?

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Your mother-in-law comes over once a week. Each time she asks why you haven't starting feeding your three-month old infant cereal. Two weeks ago you said you would think about it. Last week you quoted advice from a health care professional.

What communication strategy could you use?

ADVICE SCENARIO CARDS // SPRING 2015

Advice Scenario Cards



Advice Scenario Cards

